FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR'S DESK

The Visions and Hopes for the Last Five Years

On the last Charge Conference of the 20th Century, which was held on December 1999, I chose a Mission Statement to bridge us to the new millennium: ”TRUST IN GOD”.

This was based on Psalm 125: 1 - ”Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abide forever.”

At that Charge Conference I talked about the first five years that I and my family moved here and start our ministry at the First Tongan United Methodist Church of Waimanalo. My fellow pilgrimage recalling those years is unbelievable. The hardships and consequences encountered trying to develop programs for improvement in all aspects. However, I am glad to say that there has never any single time I thought of giving up. My TRUST was and still in GOD.

I am therefore thinking of rewinding the same Mission Statement to pursue our vision for the last five years that most likely to be my final years at my ministry here at Vaikau'aki. My family and I have been praying for God's guidance and there is no doubt, that whatever God's will we would whole hearted do accordingly. Allow me to start wrapping up from 2008 as we go along, until 2012.

The year 2008 is when we marked the milestone of the 20th anniversary of The First Tongan United Methodist Church and was known as Vaikau'aki. I can say that we are walking from grace to greater ones and get the blessings of TRUST IN GOD.

1. The Spiritual Program is improving continuously as year passes, this applies to the English Speaking Service as well as the main Service which is conducted in Tongan. The men’s Bible Study Sharing and women’s Akotapu as well as prayer meetings are still practicing on Wednesdays and Sundays after Church services. Increasing of church members and lay preachers is a sign of growing.

2. It has been proved in many years that our singing is one of our strength, this applies to Church Choir, Women's Choir, Youth Choir and the Sunday School Choir. This year the Youth Choir were able to record their Volume II dvd which were all Tongan Anthem. It was also this year that the Youth Choir were invited to sing at the General Conference held at Texas. This was a rare chance for any minority cultural group, and the preparation was not easy. However, God allowed the
Vaikau'aki Youth to join the annual Conference and spread the Words of God through raising their voice in singing.

3. The Building and Repairing: We decided to focus on repairing and maintenance of the sanctuary and we’re aiming to relocate and renovate the bathrooms. Although we have not received our building permits we continue to anticipate and believe that we will be able to begin building on God’s time.

4. The Annual Tithing: We celebrated our 20th anniversary with one week long festivities. Our honored guest was Bishop Mary Ann Swenson who was accompanied by her husband Jeff. It was very special to have the Bishop attend the tithing at the same time she was able to bless our breaking ground ceremony. With this our annual tithing donation totaled $222,910.00. It is true what the scripture says, where man ends, God begins.

2009: Our mission statement this year was "Vision Produces Hope' which has been our guide to our visionary journey set. Before we set sail on our life journey for 2009 we began packing all the necessities and tools we needed on the first week of January during our prayer week. It is true we had accumulated many obstacles and dark days but we preserved and continued to patch and beautify our church premises:

1. The Church Sanctuary: Renovations were made to the church, walls were made sturdier, fresh coat of paint was added to enhance cleanliness of church, a new door was added and ceiling fans. Also added were improvements to the outside of the church adding a new sidewalk. We have also set goals to improve the front of the inside sanctuary where the podium is to be completed towards the ending of this year.

2. We have completed our designated area for youth young adults to play sports and have recently been using it for volleyball before our youth and young adult programs. This area is ideal for our youth and young adults because it keeps their interest in our programs by providing activities they enjoy outside of church. The Psalm says that the house of the Lord is a sanctuary for shelter to all men which we agree and look forward to continuing.

3. Our Church Outdoors: An area was allotted for outside services (.i.e. candlelight vigils, sunrise services etc.), we have also put up a cross and have named the area Agape. This area is designated and targeting outdoor friendly services like sunrise service Easter morning. (next to Agape) by building a rock wall around it, this area is called Shalom. We were able to bless both these areas during our Annual Tithing this year.
4. English Worship Service: It is evident how this program has excelled this past year, our youth and young adults continue to keep this program alive for the purpose of worship contemporary style. This year Ema Arelliano has taken the lead for the program along with assistants Pauline Taumalolo and Leslie Kolone Fine. This particular service continues to be the voice of your young people providing them a stepping stone to share devotions, sing music and worship God. It gives me joy to see our young people evolve and mature through this service.

5. The Youth: We continue to envision that "the reef of today is the island of today" incorporating the saying to our youth by saving "the youth of today is the church of today." We continue to increase our participating youth members also increased are students whom have graduated high school and now attend colleges and universities. Overall we continue to encourage our youth to use their talents and educational achievements to give back to our church. There are several programs that our youth are capable in running independently.

From 2010 to 2012: There are visions we have put ahead but look forward to completing and achieving during this duration and continue to have faith with God that all will be successful. Although we have accumulated many closed doors during our journey, there is no obstacle to hard that we can't overcome. There is a hymnal verse in the Tongan hymnal that First Tongan United Methodist Church uses to visualize:

Like a Lighthouse
Out standing and in plain sight
Magnetizing the attraction of world
Marching towards the light
Knowing what lies ahead
Every man feels
The coming and everlasting heaven

My fellow journeyman, I propose "Trust in God" as our mission statement for 2010 and support it with the Psalm 125: 1 "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever." I would like to thank the Associate Pastor and his family, Lay Leader, Administrative chair and all church delegates, families and everyone of the church. There is no warrior that stands on his own but when we stand together with God we are 3b!e to achieve anything. I would also like to
thank my wife Anesiu and also my children and grandchildren for your support throughout my journey and I’d like to thank all my relatives and my fellow church goers. All your support and encouragement means a lot to me which has given me a separate peace of mind to know that I have a safe haven with my family. We have achieved so much as this year was a year of hard work and we look forward to seeing another year of hard work in support of our mission. I look forward to the day when the Prince of Peace arrives to bring us together and lead us again to a New Year, a New Year filled with strength and grace.

Shalom & Agape,

-Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Langi Fine-